

How To Acquire Good Manners

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Source: Al-Ibaanah.com

[This is a chapter from the book "*Makaarim-ul-Akhlaaq*" (pg. 32-35) [Dar-ul-Watan Lin-Nashr] By Shaikh Muhammad bin Saalih Al-'Uthaimeen, prepared and arranged by Khaalid Abu Saalih.]

We mentioned previously that good manners can either be present in someone naturally or they can be instilled into him (i.e. through learning). And we stated that inherent good manners are better than acquired good manners. We mentioned a proof for this which was the Messenger of Allaah's (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) statement to Al-Ashaj bin 'Abdil-Qais (*radyalLaahu 'anh*u):

"Rather, Allaah has molded (i.e. created) you upon these two (noble characteristics)." ¹

It is also because good manners that are innate do not disappear from a human being whereas good manners that are acquired may vanish from a person in many instances since it requires constant practice and effort as well as exercise and hard work. It also requires that one be reminded of it whenever there occurs something that affects a human being. This is why when a man once came to the Messenger of Allaah (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) and said to him:

"O Messenger of Allaah, advise me", he (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: **"Do not get angry."** The man then repeated his request several times, upon which the Prophet continued to reply: **"Do not get angry."** ²

The Prophet (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) also said:

"The strong person is not the one who wrestles and overpowers his opponents. Rather the strong person is the one who controls himself in times of anger." ³

So a strong person is not someone who wrestles with people and overpowers them, He is someone **"who controls himself in times of anger."** He takes hold of himself and restrains himself during instances when he becomes angry.

A person controlling himself in times of anger is considered a characteristic of good manners. So if you become angry, do not let your anger penetrate, rather seek refuge in Allaah from the accursed Devil. And if you are standing, then sit down. If you are sitting, then lie down. And if your anger increases, then perform ablution (*wudoo*) until it goes away.

A person may acquire and earn good manners by way of training (himself), working hard at it and through constant practice. So he may obtain good manners through one of the following methods:

First: By contemplating on the Book of Allaah and the Sunnah of His Messenger: One should look up the texts that show the virtue of the particular noble

¹ Reported by Abu Dawood (no. 5335), Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (4/206), Muslim with only the first part of it (no. 25 & 26), and At-Tirmidhee (no. 2011)

² Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 6116) and At-Tirmidhee (no. 2020)

³ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 6114) and Muslim (no. 107)

characteristic that he wishes to characterize himself with. This is since when a believer sees some texts that praise a characteristic or action, he implements them.⁴

The Prophet (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) indicated this when he said: **"The example of a good companion and an evil companion is like that of a seller of musk and a blacksmith. The seller of musk either sells you (perfume), gives you free samples or you get a pleasing smell from him. As for the example of an evil companion – such as a blacksmith – he either burns your clothes or you get a nasty smell from him."**⁵

Second: He should accompany those who are known for having good manners whilst staying far away from those who possess bad manners and poor actions. This is such that he turns this companionship of his into an educational institute that assists him in (his goal of) obtaining good manners. The Prophet (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) said: **"A man is upon the religion of his close friend, so let each of you look into whom he takes as a close friend."**⁶

Third: He should reflect on the consequences that come as a result of having bad manners. This is since a person with bad manners is despised. A person with bad manners is forsaken. A person with bad manners is always talked about in a bad way. So when one comes to realize that bad manners will lead him to all of this, he will then keep away from it.

Fourth: He should always envision an image of the Prophet's (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) manners and how he (*sallAllaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) would humble himself before the creation, being kind to them, forgiving to them and patient with their harm. So if a person visualizes the Prophet's character and the fact that he was the best of mankind and the greatest of those who worshipped Allaah, he will then perceive a low image of himself and at this point the influence that arrogance has over him will be shattered and this will cause him to have good manners.

⁴ Purification (of the soul) cannot be achieved except by way of the messengers as stated by Ibn Al-Qayyim when he said: "Purifying the souls is harder and more difficult than curing the bodies. So whoever purifies his soul through exercise, hard work and being in isolation – all of which the messengers did not come with – he is like a sick person that tries to cure himself based on his own opinion. Where is his opinion with respect to the expertise of a doctor?! The messengers are the doctors of the hearts – there is no way to purify and rectify the hearts except through their way, at their hands and by totally submitting and complying with them. And we ask Allaah for His assistance!" [Madaarij-us-Saalikeen (2/300)]

⁵ Reported by Al-Bukhaaree (no. 2101 & 5534) and Muslim (no. 146); An-Nawawee said: "This shows the virtue of accompanying righteous and good people – those who possess chivalry, good manners, piety, knowledge, and good behavior. It also shows the prohibition of accompanying evil people, innovators, and those who backbite people or who are very wicked and so on, i.e. other types of condemnable characteristics." [See *Sharh Saheeh Muslim*: (16/394)]

⁶ Reported by At-Tirmidhee (no. 2378) who said it was *hasan saheeh*, Abu Dawood (no. 4833), Ahmad in *al-Musnad* (2/303, 334) and deemed *hasan* (sound) by Al-Albaanee in *Saheeh-ul-Jaami' as-Sagheer* (no. 3545) and *Silsilat-ul-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah* (no. 927).